

City of Seattle

ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

A. BACKGROUND:

1. Name of proposed project, if applicable:

Proposed revisions and corrections to zoning regulations for Downtown Seattle, and clarifications to other Land Use Code sections affected by the Downtown zoning amendments adopted on April 3, 2006, Ordinance 122054.

2. Name of Applicant:

City of Seattle

3. Address and phone number of applicant and contact person:

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4. Date checklist prepared:

June 2006

5. Agency requesting checklist:

City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development

6. Proposed timing or schedule (include phasing if applicable):

The amendments will be discussed in a public hearing in August 2006, and considered by the City Council in September 2006.

7. Do you have any plans for future additions, expansions, or further activities related to or connected with this proposal? If yes, explain:

Approval of these possible amendments could result in additional analysis and decisions pertaining to the topics of the amendments.

8. List any environmental information you know about that has been prepared, or will be prepared, directly related to this proposal:

The Final Environmental Impact Statement for Downtown Height and Density Changes, published January 2005, includes related environmental information.

9. **Do you know whether applications are pending for governmental approvals of other proposals directly affecting the property covered by your proposal? If yes, explain:**

It is likely that there are pending applications for construction or other government approvals in or near downtown. However, the recommended outcome of these amendments is not expected to substantially alter decisionmaking on any individual pending application.

10. **List any governmental approvals or permits that will be needed for your proposal, if known:**

The possible amendments will require approval by the City Council prior to their adoption.

11. **Give a brief, complete description of your proposal, including the proposed uses and the size of the project and site.**

Proposal Description:

Changes to Downtown Code Sections

- Incorporate updated and corrected maps, and correct erroneous map references;
- Add elementary and secondary schools as uses that satisfy street level use requirements;
- Specify that tower spacing regulations apply in DMC zones with height limits over 160 feet south of Union Street;
- Correct the point at which nonresidential tower separation limits apply (above a height of 240 feet rather than 145 feet);
- Remove a residential tower width exception for combined lots;
- Revise requirements for provision of pedestrian lighting;
- Clarify the exception for the location of above-grade parking in Section 23.49.019;
- Clarify the regulations for the location of access to parking;
- Repeal an obsolete vesting provision for developments that participate in the Transfer of Development Credits Program downtown;
- Repeal an obsolete definition for maximum structure height downtown; and
- Remove an obsolete reference to a deleted definition from the Downtown Amenity Standards.

Changes to Other Code Sections

- Amend Section 23.41.012 to specify that Design Review departures may not be granted from Land Use Code provisions for transportation concurrency; definitions; measurements; standards for location of access to parking in downtown zones; and most requirements related to streets, alleys and easements in Chapter 23.53;
- Amend Section 23.45.008 to clarify the effect of changes in the definition of low-income housing on the provisions for parking for low-income housing in multifamily zones.

12. **Location of the proposal.** Give sufficient information for a person to understand the precise location of your proposed project, including a street address, if any, and section, township, and range, if known. If a proposal would occur over a range of area, provide the range or boundaries of the site(s). Provide a legal description, site plan, vicinity map, and topographic map, if reasonably available. While you should submit any plans required by the agency, you are not required to duplicate maps or detailed plans submitted with any permit applications related to this checklist.

The downtown code amendments would affect the area between Denny Way and South Royal Brougham Way, Interstate 5 and Elliott Bay. The remaining amendments would change regulations that apply citywide outside of single family zoned areas.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS:

1. Earth

- a. **General description of site (circle one):** Flat, rolling, hilly, steep slopes, mountainous, other.
Ranges from flat to hilly.
- b. **What is the steepest slope on the site (approximate percent slope)?**
Not applicable.
- c. **What general types of soils are found on the site (for example, clay, sand, gravel, peat, muck)? If you know the classification of agricultural soils, specify them and note any prime farmland.**
Not applicable.
- d. **Are there surface indications or history of unstable soils in the immediate vicinity? If so, describe.**
Not applicable.
- e. **Describe the purpose, type and approximate quantities of any filling or grading proposed. Indicate source of fill.**
Not applicable.
- f. **Could erosion occur as a result of clearing, construction or use? If so, generally describe.**
No.
- g. **About what percent of the site will be covered with impervious surfaces after project construction (for example, asphalt or buildings)?**
Not applicable.
- h. **Proposed measures to reduce or control erosion or other impacts to the earth, if any:**
None.

2. Air

- a. **What type of emissions to the air would result from the proposal (i.e., dust, automobile, odors, industrial, wood smoke) during construction and when the project is completed? If any, generally describe and give approximate quantities if known.**
None.

- b. Are there any off-site sources of emissions or odor that may affect your proposal? If so, generally describe.

None.

- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control emissions or other impacts to air, if any:

None.

3. Water

a. Surface Water:

- 1) Is there any surface water body on or in the immediate vicinity of the site (including year-round and seasonal streams, saltwater, lakes, ponds, wetlands)? If yes, describe type and provide names. If appropriate, state what stream or river it flows into.

Several water bodies in and around the city of Seattle.

- 2) Will the project require any work over, in or adjacent to (within 200 feet) the described waters? If yes, please describe and attach available plans.

No.

- 3) Estimate the amount of fill and dredge material that would be placed in or removed from surface water or wetlands and indicate the area of the site that would be affected. Indicate the source of fill material.

Not applicable.

- 4) Will the proposal require surface water withdrawals or diversions? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

No.

- 5) Does the proposal lie within a 100-year floodplain? If so, note location on the site plan.

No.

- 6) Does the proposal involve any discharges of waste materials to surface waters? If so, describe the type of waste and anticipated volume of discharge.

None.

b. Ground Water:

- 1) Will groundwater be withdrawn or will water be discharged to groundwater? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

None.

- 2) Describe waste material that will be discharged into the ground for septic tanks or other sources, if any (for example: Domestic sewage; industrial, containing the following chemicals...; agricultural; etc.). Describe the general size of the system, the number of such systems, the number of houses to be served (if applicable), or the number of animals or humans the system(s) are expected to serve.

None.

- c. **Water Runoff (including storm water):**
- 1) **Describe the source of runoff (including storm water) and method of collection and disposal, if any (include quantities, if known). Where will this water flow? Will this water flow into other waters? If so, describe.**
None.
 - 2) **Could waste materials enter ground or surface waters? If so, generally describe.**
None.
- d. **Proposed measures to reduce or control surface, ground or runoff water impacts, if any:**
None.

4. **Plants**

a. **Check the types of vegetation found on the site:**

- ☐ Deciduous tree: alder, maple, aspen, other
☐ Evergreen tree: fir, cedar, pine, other
☐ Shrubs
☐ Grass
☐ Pasture
☐ Crop or grain
☐ Wet soil plants: cattail, buttercup, bulrush, skunk cabbage, other
☐ Water plants: water lily, eelgrass, milfoil, other
☐ Other types of vegetation

For Downtown Amendments: Downtown Seattle is an urbanized area; vegetation is primarily limited to a variety of trees and landscaping in street rights-of-way, landscaping associated with private development sites, and vegetation in public parks.

For Citywide amendments: A variety of vegetation may be found across the city.

- b. **What kind and amount of vegetation will be removed or altered?**
None.
- c. **List threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site:**
None.
- d. **Proposed landscaping, use of native plants or other measures to preserve or enhance vegetation on the site, if any:**
None.

5. **Animals**

a. **Circle any birds and animals that have been observed on or near the site or are known to be on or near the site:**

- Birds: hawk, heron, eagle, songbirds, other: _____
Mammals: deer, bear, elk, beaver, other: _____
Fish: bass, salmon, trout, herring, shellfish, other: _____
Other: _____

- b. **List any threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site.**
None relevant.
- c. **Is the site part of a migration route? If so, explain.**
Not applicable.

d. Proposed measures to preserve or enhance wildlife, if any:

Not applicable.

6. Energy and Natural Resources

a. What kinds of energy (electric, natural gas, oil, wood stove, solar) will be used to meet the completed project's energy needs? Describe whether it will be used for heating, manufacturing etc.

Not applicable.

b. Would your project affect the potential use of solar energy by adjacent properties? If so, generally describe.

No.

c. What kinds of energy conservation features are included in the plans of this proposal? List other proposed measures to reduce or control energy impacts, if any:

None.

7. Environmental Health

a. Are there any environmental health hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, risk of fire and explosion, spill or hazardous waste, that could occur as a result of this proposal? If so, describe.

No.

1) Describe special emergency services that might be required.

Not applicable.

2) Proposed measures to reduce or control environmental health hazards, if any:

None.

b. Noise

1) What types of noise exist in the area which may affect your project (for example: traffic, equipment, operation, other)?

None.

2) What types and levels of noise would be created by or associated with the project on a short-term or a long-term basis (for example: traffic, construction, operation, other)? Indicate what hours noise would come from the site.

None.

3) Proposed measures to reduce or control noise impacts, if any:

None.

8. Land and Shoreline Use

a. What is the current use of the site and adjacent properties?

For Downtown Amendments: A high density mix of uses, including residential, transportation uses, and a broad range of commercial activity, including office, retail and hotel uses.

For Citywide Amendments: A variety of housing, commercial, industrial, and open space uses.

b. Has the site been used for agriculture? If so, describe.

Not applicable.

c. Describe any structures on the site.

For Downtown Amendments: The entire built environment in Downtown Seattle.

For Citywide Amendments: The entire built environment outside of single family zones.

d. Will any structures be demolished? If so, what?

No.

e. What is the current zoning classification of the site?

1. **Downtown amendments**—Downtown zoning categories within Downtown Seattle—including Downtown Office Core 1, Downtown Office Core 2, Downtown Mixed Commercial, Downtown Retail Core, Downtown Mixed Residential, Pioneer Square Mixed, International District Residential, International District Mixed, Downtown Harborfront 2 and Pike Place Market.

2. **Other Amendments**—Amendments to the standards that are departable through the Design Review process would apply citywide in zones where design review is applicable. An amendment to create consistency with the new definition of low-income housing would apply to multifamily zones.

f. What is current comprehensive plan designation of the site?

For Downtown Amendments: Urban Center.

For Other Amendments: Various Comprehensive Plan designations apply to areas affected by the amendments to design review and multifamily zones citywide.

g. If applicable, what is the current shoreline master program designation of the site?

Not applicable.

h. Has any part of the site been classified as an "environmentally sensitive" area? If so, specify.

As mapped in the city's critical areas mapping.

i. Approximately how many people would reside or work in the completed project?

Not applicable.

j. Approximately how many people would the completed project displace?

Not applicable.

k. Proposed measures to avoid or reduce displacement impacts, if any:

None.

l. Proposed measures to ensure the proposal is compatible with existing and projected land uses and plans, if any:

Review and approval by elected decisionmakers.

9. Housing

a. Approximately how many units would be provided, if any? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.

Not applicable.

- b. **Approximately how many units, if any, would be eliminated? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.**
Not applicable.

- c. **Proposed measures to reduce or control housing impacts, if any:**
None.

10. Aesthetics

- a. **What is the tallest height of any proposed structure(s), not including antennas; what is the principal exterior building material(s) proposed?**
Not applicable.

- b. **What views in the immediate vicinity would be altered or obstructed?**
Not applicable.

- c. **Proposed measures to reduce or control aesthetic impacts, if any:**
None.

11. Light and Glare

- a. **What type of light or glare will the proposal produce? What time of day would it mainly occur?**
Not applicable.

- b. **Could light or glare from the finished project be a safety hazard or interfere with views?**
Not applicable.

- c. **What existing off-site sources of light or glare may affect your proposal?**
Not applicable.

- d. **Proposed measures to reduce or control light and glare impacts, if any:**
None.

12. Recreation

- a. **What designated and informal recreational opportunities are in the immediate vicinity?**
Not applicable.

- b. **Would the proposed project displace any existing recreational uses? If so, describe.**
No.

- c. **Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts on recreation, including recreation opportunities to be provided by the project or applicant, if any:**
None.

13. Historical and Cultural Preservation

- a. **Are there any places or objects listed on, or proposed for national, state, or local preservation registers known to be on or next to the site? If so, generally describe.**
Entire known inventory of such resources in Downtown Seattle.

- b. **Generally describe any landmarks or evidence of historic, archaeological, scientific, or cultural importance known to be on or next to the site?**

Not applicable.

- c. **Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts, if any:**

None.

14. Transportation

- a. **Identify public streets and highways serving the site, and describe the proposed access to the existing street system. Show on site plans, if any.**

For Downtown Amendments: The entire street network in Downtown Seattle, between approximately Denny Way and Yesler Way.

For Other Amendments: Entire street network citywide.

- b. **Is the site currently served by public transit? If not, what is the approximate distance to the nearest transit stop?**

Not applicable.

- c. **How many parking spaces would the completed project have? How many would the project eliminate?**

Not applicable.

- d. **Will the proposal require any new roads or streets, or improvements to existing roads or streets, not including driveways? If so, generally describe (indicate whether public or private).**

No.

- e. **Will the project use (or occur in the immediate vicinity of) water, rail, or air transportation? If so, generally describe.**

No.

- f. **How many vehicular trips per day would be generated by the completed project? If known, indicate when peak volumes would occur.**

Not applicable.

- g. **Proposed measures to reduce or control transportation impacts, if any:**

None.

15. Public Services

- a. **Would the project result in an increased need for public services (for example: fire protection, police protection, health care, schools, other)? If so, generally describe.**

No.

- b. **Proposed measures to reduce or control direct impacts on public services, if any.**

None.

16. Utilities

- a. **Utilities currently available at the site: electricity, natural gas, water, refuse service, telephone, sanitary sewer, septic system, other.**

For Downtown Amendments: All utilities within Downtown Seattle.

For Other Amendments: All utilities citywide.

- b. **Describe the utilities that are proposed for the project, the utility providing the service, and the general construction activities on the site or in the immediate vicinity which might be needed:**

None.

C. SIGNATURE

Signature provided following section D below.

D. SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR NON-PROJECT ACTIONS

Because these questions are very general, it may be helpful to read them in conjunction with the list of the elements of the environment.

When answering the questions, be aware of the extent of the proposal, or the types of activities likely to result from the proposal, would affect the item at a greater intensity or at a faster rate than if the proposal were not implemented. Respond briefly and in general terms.

1. **How would the proposal be likely to increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise?**

The proposed revisions would not increase the likelihood of discharge to water, emissions to air, production, storage or release of toxic or hazardous substances, or noise production.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce such increases are:

None proposed.

2. **How would the proposal be likely to affect plants, animals, fish or marine life?**

The potential for environmental impacts to plants, animals, fish or marine life is low as a result of these proposed changes, as they mainly would affect areas that are already of high urban densities.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve plants, animals, fish, or marine life are:

None proposed.

3. **How would the proposal be likely to deplete energy or natural resources?**

The potential for environmental impacts to energy and natural resources is low as a result of these proposed changes, due to a minimal relationship to size and density limits of Downtown development or development in other applicable areas.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve energy and natural resources are:

None proposed.

4. **How would the proposal be likely to use or affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened, or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands?**

The proposed changes are not likely to affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated for government protection, due to general minimal presence of these resources within the affected area, and the low potential for influencing additional impacts as a result of the proposed changes.

Proposed measures to protect such resources or to avoid or reduce impacts are:

None proposed.

5. **How would the proposal be likely to affect land and shoreline use, including whether it would allow or encourage land and shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans?**

The proposed changes would not affect shoreline use, or allow or encourage land use or shoreline uses that are incompatible with existing plans.

The changes can be divided into several categories based on their likely effect on land use. Unless noted, all of these apply only to Downtown zones.

1. The following amendments would have no appreciable adverse effects on land use, as they are corrections intended to fix errors, ensure consistency with defined terms and remove obsolete provisions:

- Incorporate updated and corrected maps, correct maps with duplicate numbers, and correct erroneous map references;
- Remove an obsolete reference to a deleted definition from the Downtown Amenity Standards;
- Repeal an obsolete vesting provision for developments that participate in the Transfer of Development Credits Program downtown;
- Repeal an obsolete definition for maximum structure height downtown; and
- Amend Section 23.45.008 to clarify the effect of previous changes in the definitions for "low-income housing" and "very low-income housing" on special provisions for low-income housing (this applies only in multifamily zones).
- Remove a residential tower width exception for combined lots in Section 23.49.058. The City Council amended proposed downtown code legislation in April, 2006, to permit a maximum tower width of 120 feet on lots less than 150 feet wide in Downtown Commercial Mixed zones, provided that an upper level setback is provided along the street above a height of 85 feet. When this provision was added, it removed the need for a tower width exception in the same subsection that allowed a width of 120 feet on lots that executed covenants with an abutting lot. However, this exception was not deleted at the time, and is proposed to be removed.

2. The following amendments would have a potential positive effect on land use:

- Amend Section 23.41.012 to specify that Design Review departures may not be granted from Land Use Code provisions for standards for access to parking in downtown zones; transportation concurrency; definitions; measurements; and most requirements related to streets, alleys and easements in Chapter 23.53. This

amendment would prevent the unintended consequences that might result if departures were granted from these requirements. It would apply citywide, except for the change to not grant departures from standards for access to parking, which would apply only in downtown zones.

- Revise the requirement for provision of pedestrian safety lighting downtown. This amendment would state that "adequate lighting for pedestrians" must be provided, rather than saying it must only be provided if ambient lighting is not adequate. The proposed change would likely result in more lighting being provided and greater safety for pedestrians downtown.
- Clarify the regulations for the location of access to parking. This amendment would address the location of access to parking on lots that front on an alley or lots that do not have alley access and front on more than one right-of-way. It would not change the current order of preference for locating the parking access, but would revise the factors that the Directors of DPD and the Seattle Department of Transportation should consider in determining when changes in the preferred location are justified. These factors are related to avoiding hazards and enhancing pedestrian and vehicular safety. Clarifying the application of these factors would have a positive effect on transportation and land use downtown. The decision of the Director would also be a standard that could not be departed from through design review.

3. The following amendments would have potential positive and negative effects on land use:

- Clarify the exception for the location of above-grade parking in Section 23.49.019. This amendment would add a criterion to the exception that allows the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Director to permit more than four floors of parking above the first floor in downtown zones. The new criterion would state that site size is not a basis for granting the exception. This may reduce the number of times that the exception is granted. If so, it could lead to a better environment for pedestrians by reducing the expanse of blank walls and uninhabited floor area above the street level and promoting more activity visible from the street. It might also lead to fewer parking spaces being provided, which could reduce Single-Occupancy Vehicle trips, a goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan. However, it could also lead to higher construction costs if more parking is provided below grade, which is more expensive than above-grade spaces.
- Add elementary and secondary schools as uses that satisfy street level use requirements. Elementary and secondary schools are permitted downtown, but are not allowed to count toward the required street level use requirement, even though they are similar to child care centers, which do count. This change would make it easier to provide space for an elementary or secondary school downtown, and would have a positive impact on downtown livability for families with children and support the Comprehensive Plan goal for downtown encouraging provision of adequate human services for downtown residents and workers. However, schools may not provide as high a level of pedestrian interest and activity as some of the other uses that count toward the street level use requirement.

- Specify that tower spacing regulations apply in DMC zones with height limits over 160 feet south of Union Street. The City Council considered tower spacing regulations for all Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zones with height limits above 160 feet in its deliberations on changes to Downtown height and density standards in spring 2006. The bill voted out of the Urban Development and Planning Committee included tower spacing requirements only for the DMC zones in Belltown and between the Pike Place Market and the Retail Core. On the day that the Council adopted a package of Downtown zoning amendments (Ordinance 122054), they approved additional tower spacing requirements in the Denny Triangle. However, when the tower spacing requirements were added back, they inadvertently did not address a thirteen and one half block area zoned DMC located south of Union Street along the eastern and southern edges of DOC1. The proposed change would add an 80 foot tower spacing requirement for this area, similar to the requirement in Belltown. The tower spacing requirement would provide a better pedestrian environment by allowing greater light and air at the street level, encouraging a variety of building size and scale, and reducing the perception of density. It could also limit the potential total density permitted in this area, though not in a way that would impact the housing and job targets set in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Correct the point at which nonresidential tower separation limits apply on very large lots (above a height of 240 feet rather than 145 feet). The Downtown Code, in Section 23.49.058C, sets a maximum tower width limit of 145 feet for nonresidential towers. The width limit applies above a height of 240 feet on very large lots (over 40,000 square feet in size). This requirement maximizes light and air at the street and helps avoid blockage of views toward Elliott Bay. Towers on such lots must be set back from each other by at least 80 feet once the maximum width of 145 feet is reached. As adopted in Ordinance 122054, this minimum separation was inadvertently required at a height of 145 feet, rather than 240 feet. The proposed amendment would correct this error and set the height at which the tower width limit and tower separation requirements apply consistently at 240'. This may provide slightly less light and air at the street level. However, it would allow the full development potential provided by the zoning on these sites, which are in areas where the Comprehensive Plan proposes to maximize commercial and housing development.

Changes to Other Code Sections

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce shoreline and land use impacts are:

None proposed.

6. How would the proposal be likely to increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities?

The proposed changes would not likely increase traffic volume demands on transportation systems or demands on public services and utilities, as they would not increase permitted building height or density.

Proposed measures to reduce or respond to such demands are:

None proposed.

7. Identify, if possible, whether the proposal may conflict with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

It is believed that the proposal would not result in conflicts with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE:

I, the undersigned, state that to the best of my knowledge the above information is true and complete. It is understood that the lead agency may withdraw any declaration of non-significance that it might issue in reliance upon this checklist should there be any willful misrepresentation or willful lack of full disclosure on my part.

Rebecca Herzfeld
Legislative Analyst, Council Central Staff